STRATEGIC PLAN FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT IN MISSISSIPPI FOR 2007-2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MISSISSIPPI STATE WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD

As Adopted June 20, 2007

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mississippi's economy, under Governor Barbour's leadership, is robust and growing. Over 38,000 new jobs have been added in the last three years, and per capita income has grown more than 15%. Many new companies have decided to locate in Mississippi, producing thousands of new high-paying jobs.

The State Workforce Investment Board has been working to consolidate and strengthen the workforce development system. A new accountability system, the Integrated Workforce Performance System, has been developed and implemented to collect and analyze the results of training and placement efforts across all public agencies. The workforce system has been consolidated to be more efficient and customer friendly. The community and junior college system, which provides most of the public training, can now deliver more demand-driven training as the result of a new funding mechanism. Enabled in 2005 by the Governor and the State Legislature, the fund now has thus far provided \$20 million annually for workforce training.

The State Workforce Investment Board now must build on its accomplishments, and the primary challenge will be the shortage of qualified workers. By 2014, Mississippi needs 200,000 more workers, but population projections indicate a growth of only 100,000 more workers. This worker shortage must be addressed first by looking inside Mississippi. Mississippi must reclaim more of its non-participants in the labor force. High school dropout rates must be reduced, and adults without a high school education must be given a chance to earn a GED. Mississippi must assist ex-offenders, welfare recipients, and those with disabilities in special training and placement so that they can become productive workers. The strategic plan calls for closer alignment of all the public workforce programs to produce more effective results through common goals. In addition, Mississippi must look outside its borders and attract workers from other states to come live and work in Mississippi.

The State Workforce Investment Board also will emphasize workforce system services to businesses, especially small businesses and entrepreneurs. In addition, the Board will emphasize training for the manufacturing sector, and remain committed to rebuilding the Gulf Coast.

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LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. The Mississippi Integrated Workforce Performance System project should be expanded to all fifteen Community/Junior Colleges and other agency data collections should be completed this year. The Board will assist in identifying resources to support the data gathering, compilation, and analysis.
- II. An Interagency Task Force on Workforce Development composed of Program Directors below the level of the Executive Director should be created. This Task Force will be charged to develop a set of recommendations on closer program coordination across agencies so that training and placement assistance will be seamlessly provided to job seekers. This Interagency Task Force will share information on all funding sources and program mission and structure and report back to the State Workforce Investment Board Executive Committee in October, 2007. The Task Force Chair will not come from any of the agencies, but will come from the State Workforce Investment Board or the Governor's Office.
- III. Endorse the Community College Career Readiness Credentialing Approach and support some amount of additional initial funding from the Workforce Investment Act so the plan can be implemented at the WIN Job Centers as well as the Community College Workforce Development Centers. Explore the use of incentives or stipends to increase training participation.
- IV. Endorse the Department of Education's redesign plan and support its implementation of Career Pathways.
- V. Partner with the Community Colleges and other organizations to explore a proposal for "recovering" high school dropouts.
- VI. Support the MDES in designing new early intervention strategies to shorten the average duration of receiving benefits, and to reduce down from 30% those who exhaust their benefits.
- VII. Explore methods to determine the reasons for non-labor force participation, and what factors would draw these individuals back into the workforce.

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- VIII. The State should implement an aggressive training, education, and placement program to reduce prison recidivism rates and increase workforce participation.
 - IX. Commend the Department of Rehabilitation Services for its example of workforce partnering, and urge the Interagency Task Force to use it as one model for better integration of services.
 - X. Request that Momentum Mississippi expand its goal of creating a positive business image to include creating an image for Mississippi that is inviting to workers who will relocate for good jobs and quality of life.
 - XI. Task the Business Outreach Committee with developing a model for Business Outreach Services. Further tasks the Committee to study the current system for entrepreneurial support and the provision of services to small businesses, and develop recommendations to the Executive Board by October. Some of these recommendations may involve legislative changes.
- XII. Form a task force headed by the CEO of the Mississippi Manufacturers Association(MMA) to support implementation of the recommendations contained in the recent MMA study of the Workforce Training Needs of the Manufacturing Sector in Mississippi, to make further recommendations, and to recommend strategies for establishing Advanced Manufacturing Centers of Excellence in the Community/Junior College System.

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